

Examining the Determinants of Social Shopping Behaviour among Malaysian Social Media Users

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Abstract

Growing trend shopping using social media (eg. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) become phenomenon among Malaysian digital consumers. Taking advantage of the social networking capabilities and development of Web 2.0 drastically has changed the pattern of buying behavior. Today, social shopping already replaces brick and mortar store since the consumers feel that the new channels offering an easier way to make purchases. Thus, this study relevant to be conducted. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to examine the predictors that affect social shopping behavior among Malaysian social media users. A questionnaire survey via hands on and Google Form in the Facebook were selected as data collection technique. Data were collected among 300 respondents in one of the higher education institutions located at Peninsular Malaysia. The analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The result indicated that perceived ease use, web interactivity and trust were positively and significantly related to social shopping behavior. However, E-service quality did not predict social shopping behavior. Based on the result, it was found that trust has the strongest predictor with social shopping behavior.

Keywords: Social Shopping, Perceived Ease of Use, Trust, E- Service Quality, Interactivity.

1. Introduction

There were 28.00 million social media users in Malaysia and it has been reported that the number of social media users in Malaysia was equivalent to 86.0 percent of the total population in January 2021 (*The Star*, 2021). The data discovered that Malaysian were among the most active users in using social media. According to Table 1, the forecast of social network users exhilarating yearly until year 2025 (*Statistica*, 2021). The upswing of social media adoption among communities around the world has also shifted the way consumer shopping from brick-and-mortar store to social shopping. Digital savvy generation (18-54 years old) of Malaysians would spend an approximately 3 hours a day on social media. This range of age generation is claimed as the highest audience in social shopping and marketing activities. They would spend their online time research about the product, update with flash sale promotions, check review at social media before purchasing, share their thoughts, opinions and reviews about their purchases which in turn influence others' purchase decisions and online customers are also influenced mostly by social media recommendations (*Boxme Global*, 2020).

In recent year, business activities conducted through social media are well known as social commerce or social shopping (Liang, Ho & Li, 2012). Along with advancement of social media application, driven of fast evolution of the internet, social networking capabilities (Lee & Lee, 2012), development of Web 2.0 (Wang, 2011) and changing of consumer lifestyle (Sarker & Kayer, 2021) leads to social shopping phenomenon among online customers. With the emergence of social commerce and the madness of people nowadays using social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok, Twitter, there have been renewed interest in shopping. Most of the social media users shift the way their shopping from choosing brick-and-mortar store to social shopping. Social shopping becomes a rising trend and s-commerce becomes one of the top channels in marketing and business activities (Hajli, 2014). S-commerce can be described as a combination of commercial and social activities that has emerged as a new model of e-commerce whereby the channels can connect the business with their consumers and sell their product and services. S-commerce differs from e-commerce in many aspects. Instead of dealing with the community of customers, s-commerce also enables Web 2.0 which is a platform that supports social web sites and allows bidirectional communication between merchant and consumer. Hajli et al. (2017) further argued that social commerce comprises of four layers relationship among individuals, conversation, community, and commerce. However, e-commerce only considers relationship between individual and commerce.

Social shopping is regarded as the crucial aspects of social commerce (Chen & Shen, 2015). Wang (2011) and Leitner and Grechenig (2007) pointed out social shopping becomes a must have for each of the modern shop owner. The power of the social media has pushed the marketers to use social media as a platform to sell the products and services. The market potential of social shopping reinforces quickly reach a large pool of potential customer, elevates merchant reputation sites (Lee & Lee, 2012) and the most important is to survive in the global economy. In particular, social shopping refers to the use of social networks to support the customers to purchase products or services (Kin and Hon (2021). Since Malaysian shoppers become more familiar with social shopping and its benefit, this shopping trend is getting popular among Malaysians and it becomes the main preference channel to them while they are doing their shopping activities. Many studies most probably are focusing mainly on online shopping but a few studies addressed social shopping (Kuo et al. 2010; Li, 2019; Shen, 2012; Hu et al, 2016). To date, there has been little research attention focused on this phenomenon of social

shopping in Malaysian context. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct and extend theoretical and empirical evidence for social shopping behavior since Kin and Hon (2021) figure out that there are still limited studies on online social shopping products in Malaysian context. Thus, this study attempts to investigate the factors that affecting purchase intention of social shopping behavior among Malaysian social media users such as Facebook and Instagram.

Table 1: Number of social network users in Malaysia from 2017 to 2020 and forecast up 2025 (in millions)

Year	Number of users in millions
2025	30.38
2024	29.85
2023	29.25
2022	28.56
2021	27.78
2020	26.72
2019	25.74
2018	24.58
2017	21.79

(Source : Statistica, 2021)

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Shopping Behavior

Nowadays, there is still no translucent definition of either social commerce and social shopping (Xu et al. 2020). Social shopping refers to the situation whereby interpersonal interactions between users on social networks and online shopping platform that may influence customers' perceptions, intention and buying behavior (Xu et al. 2020). Online customers are easily influenced by their friends, family, and other users through post, sharing, comment and recommendation. Other scholar by Kin and Hon (2021) defined social shopping as the use of social networks to support the customers to purchase products or services. Compared with brick-and-mortar store, social shopping is easier, accessible and convenient to social media users while they are searching products and services information (Kim, 2013; Xu et al, 2020). This enables them to share shopping advice and recommendation among online communities (Shen, 2012; Chen & Shen 2015) and therefore increased shopping experience (Kim, 2013). Community-based interaction and sharing of consumer experiences towards products will lead to more customer satisfaction and loyalty among social media users when involving in social shopping activities. Collaborative shopping environments in social media causes positive impact to online shopping websites and forums, thus, making the potential customers more comfortable and confident in sharing and discussing shopping activities on social media (Xu et al. 2020). A qualitative study by Xu et al. (2020) identified two types of platforms whereby online shoppers participate in collaborative social shopping activities such as 1) social media (e.g Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp) where social media users of this platform can share, discuss, comment and recommend within the communities in the existing social network. 2) Review site or forum of social media users.

Previous study in the social shopping context have drawn different perspectives to the antecedents influencing shopping intention. Sarker and Kayer (2021) has conducted a study among Bangladeshi customers which revealed perceived usefulness, E-WOM, website quality, perceived enjoyment and trust have a positive impact toward social shopping intention while perceived risk did not contribute impact to the behavior. Based on Technolgy Acceptance Model

(TAM), Shen and Eder (2009) proposed another three constructs such as perceived enjoyment, social presence and social comparison, besides perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. All constructs have affected both behavioral intentions to adopt social shopping sites. Studies have extensively applied Stimulus-Organism-Response Model. Li (2019) investigated that customers' virtual experience influence intention to purchase product via social commerce sites. The findings indicated that social commerce construct has significant effect on social interaction but does not affect social shopping intention.

2.2 Perceived Ease of Use

Most previous scholars agreed that ease of use is one of the major variables in determining social shopping. It seems to be concurrent with other studies that found support the relationship between perceived ease of use and social shopping behavior (Suki, 2013; Iriani & Andjarwati, 2020). They tend to use social media platform when doing online shopping because it does not require a lot of effort. By understanding the situation above, perceived ease of use can be referred to as the concept of easy to understand and easy to use that may give sense of pleasure for the customers (Sharma & Bouko, 2013). The ease of understanding information, the use of application and the service provided may affect consumers' online shopping decision (Iriani & Andjarwati, 2020). On the other hand, Hernandez et al. (2009) indicate that the importance of ease of use is only for short term, and it does not influence future purchase intention especially among youth. Consumers may tend to buy online if the process of ordering is simple and easy to understand. If customers feel complicated and require much time and effort when they want to purchase online, they might feel frustrated.

H1: Perceived ease of use is positively related to social shopping behavior

2.3 Trust

Understanding consumer trust is essential for the continuing of social commerce. The concept of trust has been identified as a key ingredient for successful business to maintain a long-term customer relationship in virtual environments as it significantly influences consumers' online behavior (Li, 2019). Trust can be defined as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the action of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action which is important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer et al. 1995). Trust plays important role and crucial factor in creates favourable feelings toward social shopping (Prompongsatorn et al. 2013). Moreover, trust is considered to reduce the perception of risk (Hansen et al. 2018), increase the reliability of perceived information (Lee & Lin, 2005), lead to positive word-of-mouth (Hajli et al. 2014) and build e-loyalty (Al-Nasser et al. 2013) Some previous studies have found that trust to be strong predictor towards social shopping behavior (Hansen et al, 2018; Sarker & Kayer, 2021). The findings tandem with the study conducted using the sample of game-based community websites in Taiwan, Kuo et al. (2010) proved that trust in product recommendations and trust in website has been recognized as a stronger total effect and played a significant role in governing consumers' to engage in social shopping. This proved consistently that trust as an antecedent of social shopping behavior.

H2: Trust is positively related to social shopping behavior

2.4 E-Service Quality

Activities of monitoring and measuring E-service quality in virtual store is becoming prominent and it turns out to be significant topic in the field of social commerce. Zeithamal, Parasuraman and Malhotra (2002) were the first who discovered the definition for E-service quality (E-SQ). They claimed how well a website facilitates effective and benefits the purchase and delivery of the product and the service. Moreover, they stated that the key to success of e-marketers is no longer rely on the presentation of the web pages or offered low price product to consumers, but the marketers should emphasize on the e-service quality (Zeithamal, Parasuraman & Malhotra, 2002). Zeithaml et al. (2000) discovered eleven dimensions of E-service quality such as reliability, responsiveness, access, flexibility, ease of navigation, efficiency, assurance, price knowledge, security/privacy, customization and site aesthetics.

Rita, Oliviera and Farisa (2019) conducted a study among Indonesian online customers found that three dimensions of e-service quality namely website design, security/privacy and fulfillment have affected customer satisfaction, customer trust and repurchase intention. Surprisingly, customer service was not relevant to predict purchase behavior among online store buyers. These findings are in line with Bhatt and Bhatt (2012) who found that regular buyers are mostly influenced by the attractiveness of website and quality service of website while occasional buyers valued website security to be more vital requirement for them. Blut (2016) conducted a study among US online shoppers revealed that website design only had a low impact towards customers satisfaction. The scholars further added that online store website design should at least be visually appealing, easy to read and provide detail information about the product. Thus, it showed that e-service quality may predict social shopping behavior among social media users.

H3: E-service quality is positively related to social shopping behavior.

2.5 Web Interactivity

Interactivity is the presence of technological features, particularly the various interface tools employed by e-commerce websites, which allow customers to online interact with the product offered by the sellers. Unlike brick-and-mortar store, it shows that interactivity gives benefit to the customers when they are shopping online. Interactivity will enhance all dimensions of online shopping experiences that will result customers satisfaction with the online shopping process (Ballantine, 2005; Pentina et al., 2011). Furthermore, rich information also can build strong capabilities and trustworthiness between customers and e-marketers (Sicilia & Ruiz, 2010). Information richness and interactivity are two aspects that should be highlighted by the marketers because they give significant implication and can increase customers' virtual experiences and generate better products and brand attitude (Schlosser et al., 2006). The experience when customers received different level of interactivity (high or low) may cause different perceived value from the site (Blasco et al., 2011). High interactivity helps consumers

to find relevant information with less time and effort (Fiore et al. 2005). This can be supported by the Isa, Salleh and Aziz (2019) in the study conducted among 973 Malaysian respondents which suggests that web experience (such as usability, interactivity and aesthetic) and digital experience were critical factors for online buying decision. As a result, customers are more likely to stay on the website and less likely to switch to other sites to search for the similar or substitute product. Interactive experience on site increases customers satisfaction even though the process of searching the information does not induce immediate purchases. Instead, pleasurable and satisfying experience may intensify positive word of mouth and lead to social shopping behavior.

H4: Interactivity is positively related to social shopping behavior.

Based on previous investigations, this study developed the following conceptual framework.

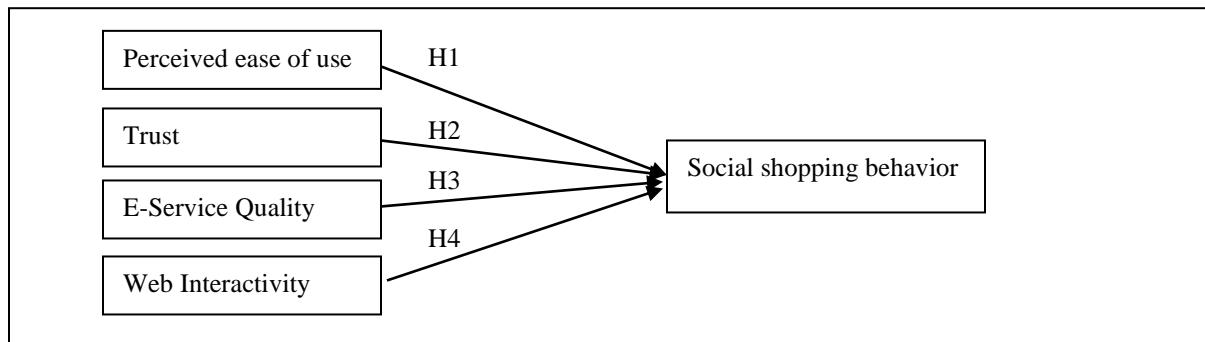


Figure 1: Proposed research model.

3. Methodology

The quantitative method was used as a research paradigm through a cross-sectional survey that focused on one of the public universities in the northern region located in Peninsular Malaysia. The population of this study targeted university communities who have experienced shopping online using social media platforms. For the purpose of this study, mall intercept research whereby involves convenience sampling was used as the sampling technique for determining size of the sample. Mall intercept is a quantitative research survey whereby respondents are intercepted in a shopping mall or other public spaces. Then, self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the respondents along with a letter requesting their permission and participation. Specifically, the data collection process was conducted in two ways 1) face to face and 2) online questionnaire. The number of hands-on questionnaires collected was 138 set while 162 respondents answered the questionnaire through Facebook. Overall, the total number of valid questionnaires used for analysis was 300 sets. The remaining 62 sets of questionnaires were not able to be collected and were uncompleted. All the items in the questionnaire comprised the items related to respondents' profiles. The independent variables namely are perceived ease of use, e-service quality, trust, web interactivity and social shopping intention as dependent variables. The questionnaire was designed based on the previous research literature and amendment which have been made to suit with the study purposes (See Table 2). The scale used in the study was based on a Likert scale with five levels (5=Strongly agree to 1=Strongly disagree). Data were analyzed using

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software in order to provide answer for the research objectives. Descriptive analysis was performed to obtain frequencies, means and standard deviations. Correlation analysis and multiple regression were performed to examine the hypotheses propositions.

Table 2: Origin of the Variables

Variables	Numbers of Items	Scale Origin
Social Shopping	4	Han (2014)
Perceived Ease of Use	5	Heijden et al (2003)
Web Interactivity	4	Huang, Zhu and Zhou (2013)
E-service Quality	5	Long and McMellon (2004)
Trust	9	Sin, Nor and Al-Agaga (2012)

4. Analysis and Results

4.1 Respondents' profiles

Out of 300 usable questionnaires, the percentage of female respondents was 66.3 percent compared to males with only 33.7 percent. In terms of state of origin, majority were from Kedah which is located at northern region of Peninsular Malaysia. All of the respondents have experiences using social media. Most of the respondents preferred Facebook with 53 percent, followed by Facebook and Instagram platform with 24.7 percent and only 22.3 percent chose Instagram. Overall, respondents have involved in social shopping, most of them favour in buying apparels with 54.7 percent, followed by accessories with 25.3 percent and the least in buying groceries and furniture with 1 percent.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

To evaluate the reliability of the scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was obtained for all variables. According to Table 3, the values of Cronbach's alpha for all variables were above 0.8 indicated that all variables were consistent and stable to be used for further analysis. Reliability result shows that social shopping intention had a good value of 0.80, perceived ease of use and web interactivity shows a Cronbach alpha value of 0.88, e-service quality reveals Cronbach alpha value of 0.86 and lastly, trust shows Cronbach Alpha of 0.89.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis of the Scales, Mean and Standard Deviation

Variables	Numbers of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Shopping	4	0.804	3.5942	.63
Perceived Ease of Use	5	0.854	3.8653	.79
Web Interactivity	4	0.880	3.9017	.62
E-service Quality	5	0.855	3.5433	.68
Trust	9	0.889	3.3111	.64

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

The summary of descriptive analysis such as mean and standard deviation obtained from all constructs are presented in Table 3. All constructs are taped on a five-point scale. The means for all study variables are between 3.3111 and 3.9017, indicating that majority of the respondents have agreed that three indicators namely perceived ease of use, web interactivity and e-service quality have a significant effect towards social shopping. However, variable of trust reveals that the respondents only give the neutral answer towards social shopping. The values of standard deviation indicate the ranged from 0.62 until 0.79.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation was performed to gain better understanding of the relationship between all variables in the study. In correlation analysis (See Table 4), perceived ease use, web interactivity, trust and e-service quality are independent variables, and intention to social shopping is the dependent variable. All independent variables namely perceived ease of use ($r=0.626$, $P<0.01$), web interactivity ($r=0.603$, $P<0.01$), e-service quality ($r=0.561$, $P<0.01$) and trust ($r=0.617$, $P<0.01$) show a strong and significant relationship to social shopping. Among all independent variables, it can be concluded that perceived ease of use is key to social shopping. Correlation is conducted because the analysis is the basic requirement to show at least some relationship with the dependent variable, with a correlation coefficient above 0.30 preferable.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

Variables	T	PEU	I	ESQ	Sig.
Trust	1				.000
Perceived Ease of Use	.590**	1			.000
Web Interactivity	.496**	.703**	1		.000
E-service Quality	.632**	.601**	.597**	1	.000
Social Shopping	.617**	.626**	.603**	.561**	

4.5 Multiple Regression

Multiple regression was used to assess the independent variables (perceived ease of use, web interactivity, e-service quality and trust) needed to predict intention to social shopping. Table 5 exhibits regression analysis results for this study. The total variance explained by the model as a whole are 51.8% $F=81.35$, $p=0.000$. In this model, only three independent variables are statistically significant, with trust reveals higher beta value (beta=0.312, $p=0.000$), followed by web interactivity (beta=0.241, $p=0.000$) and perceived ease of use (beta=0.220, $p=0.000$). However, the result shows that e-service quality was not significant to social shopping. Based on coefficient analysis, the model as a whole explains 51.8% of the variance in intention to social shopping. From the result gathered above, it can be summarized that trust has made a unique and statistically significant contribution to the prediction of intention to social shopping. It indicates that trust uniquely explains 31.2% of the variance in social shopping intention, web interactivity indicates a unique contribution of 24.1% to the explanation of variance in social shopping intention, whereas perceived ease of use indicates a unique contribution of 22% of the variance

in social shopping intention. Of these three independent variables, trust makes the largest unique contribution to the prediction of social shopping intention.

Table 5: Regression Analysis

Variables	B	Sig.
Perceived Ease of Use	.220	.000
Web Interactivity	.241	.000
E-service Quality	.088	.131
Trust	.312	.000
Adjusted R Square	.518	
F Value	81.351	

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this study is to discover to what extent the factors might affect social shopping behaviour. As a result, only three independent variables (perceived ease of use, web interactivity and trust) have a positive impact towards social shopping behavior. Users of social media have recognized how easy and hard the sites were when they did online shopping activities. Most of the social media users were more attractive with the technologies which was easy to use. This finding is in line with the Moslehpour et al. (2018). Furthermore, Childers et al. (2001) argue that online shoppers eagerly choose the convenience sites which requires less effort when doing online purchase. These findings showed that perceived ease of use is very important factor that should be considered by virtual store to succeed and sustain in new era of marketplaces. Since the evident shows that ease of use is crucial in determining online purchase behavior, therefore, it is vital for all modern marketers to make sure their social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.) are user-friendly and they require less mental effort to boost up the online purchase intention among new generation of online customers. Therefore, technologies which are perceived as easy to use will stimulate social media users to do shopping online.

In addition, interactivity also influences social shopping behavior among social media users. This result is in accordance with the study conducted by Huang, Zhu and Zhou (2013) that stated provision of rich information enhancement interactivity would increase the intention in online shopping. The effects of perceived interactivity, perceived personalization and perceived sociability of social shopping systems will facilitate social experience among social media users and encourage them to engage and participate in social shopping activities (Zhang & Zhu, 2011). Finally, from the data analyses, it has been reported that trust has the greater influence toward social shopping behavior. These findings support the study conducted by Prompongsatorn et al. (2013), who found that trust is the strong determinant and act of key drivers of online shopping behavior. All virtual store sites should provide valid information to social media users in order to build trust among the consumers' minds. However, perhaps most surprising is e-service quality which is not a significant predictor for social shopping behavior. According to the result, and in contrast to the previous findings (Al-Nasser et al. 2015), e-service quality was found to have no impact on social shopping behavior. These findings might indicate that young customers do not emphasize on security or privacy, web site design and after-sales support when they involve in online shopping. This is because the respondents of this study were young people and their lifestyles and the backgrounds as students demand them to shop online.

In conclusion, social shopping provides more benefits compared to offline selling as it is an easier way for consumers to browse the products before buying them. Furthermore, it gives

them more power to seek information and get details about the products. This study indicates ease of use and fast checkout process are important factors in attracting consumers to do online shopping. Furthermore, the finding proves that website with rich interactive tools and features can influence consumers' social shopping intention. Online retailers can create esthetically web utilities and features that provide benefits of enjoyment. Additionally, trust is an important factor that contributes to positive social shopping behavior. Consumer trust will influence the frequency of their online shopping. This study helps online retailers to successfully develop marketing strategies such as excellent website design that consists of adequate information, is easy to make payments, has feedback features and offers some discounts as well as promotions and fast loading capacity to attract consumers and consequently produced desired outcomes and profits.

Similar to other studies, this study also has some limitations. Firstly, this study has covered one of the public universities in northern region in Peninsular Malaysia. The sample size was too small which focused on northern region area only. Further research should also consider a larger sample size which focuses on the whole nation of Malaysia. Secondly, a cross-sectional strategy was employed for this survey. Future study could look into and apply a longitudinal strategy. Furthermore, future research should be undertaken by identifying other factors that affect social shopping intention such as perceived risk (e.g., financial risk, product risk, security risk).

6. About The Author

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